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CEREBUS
MELMOTH
FOUR

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143
FEB

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Synchronicity strikes.

Even while I was beginning to draw the first few Jumpeen Prince Mick pages (last issue), I picked up a copy of Bill Wyman's autobiography *Stone Alone*. The dedication to his son is an extraordinary piece of writing; worth the price of admission in and of itself.

The most pertinent parts of the book (for me) are the horror stories of mismanagement and abuse from the scum-bag business type types. The deal with Allen Klein is struck behind the backs of Bill and Charlie and Brian. When Wyman expresses reservations on being informed of the tentative plan (which is actually a 'done deed') Keith cuts him off with "We have to trust *someone*." They could've been a couple of kids named Siegel and Shuster. While newspapers are hailing the Stones as millionaires many times over, Wyman's bank account hovers between a hundred and two hundred pounds at any given point in his narrative. Robert Stigwood fucks them over. It would be funny if it wasn't the way all artists are treated by business people.

When I was getting the Notebook pages together for the *Church & State* biweeklies, I ran across a few little sketches of Harlan Ellison I did when I stayed at his place for a couple of days in 1983. Synchronicity. As usually happens when the opportunity presents itself to get to know someone you've admired for years, your mind goes blank. It was the middle of the second day when I remembered that Harlan had hung out with the Stones in 196 . . . 6? . . . 7? The second U.S. tour I believe; developing a film project or Stones biography or some such. I was sitting on a kitchen stool near Harlan's awesome art deco breakfast nook when I asked him what they were like. I don't remember what he thought of Charlie or Keith, but he did say that Mick Jagger struck him as self-isolating; intentionally aloof and mystical. Brian was an asshole pure and simple. Always doing really stupid and hurtful things. As for Bill Wyman . . . they were good friends. He really liked Bill and they hung out quite a bit together.

"In fact" he said by way of conclusion, since Harlan has little patience with fanboy questions of any stripe; sci-fi, rock 'n' roll or Hollywood," Bill Wyman sat on that very bar stool you're sitting on right now."

I didn't think about it much until I got to page 321 of *Stone Alone*, the L.A. part of the second tour and there he is! Two paragraphs on Bill Wyman's great friend Harlan Ellison.

I jumped up and dialed (yes I still have a dial phone) the first few digits of Harlan's number. And then I remembered the last time I called Harlan in a fit of fanboy gushiness. I had found a copy of the only part of the Mr. Mind serial he had never seen; *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 25 and sent it along after meeting him on the U.S. Tour in 1982. He responded with several autographed hardcovers of his work which I proceeded to devour feverently over two or three days. I made the mistake of phoning to enthuse about several of the essays and short stories. He let me rattle on for a few minutes and then cut the conversation icily short leaving me with the unmistakeable impression that I should *only* phone again if I had something important to say. If Harlan is the egomaniac he's painted to be, he's the only one I've met who is completely disinterested in flattery, feigned or genuine.
So, if you'll forgive me, Harlan . . .

HEY EVERYBODY! I KNOW SOMEONE WHO KNOWS *THE* BILL WYMAN!!

There, now — that wasn't so bad, was it?

★★★★★★★★★★

Synchronicity, synchronicity, strikes, strikes.

Two days after I wrote the above, Monique was on lunch when the phone order line rang. Guess who? Ken Viola, producer of the *Masters of Comic Book Art* video ordering his copy of *Jaka's Story*. After we got all the ordering info out of the way, I asked him how the Stones were doing (Ken has been a roadie for every Stones tour since the late 1800's). He hadn't seen Mick since the Steel Wheels tour, but he had just visited Keith a couple of weeks before. The word is that the Stones will tour again before the end of the year. Yippee! Monique got back from lunch while Ken and I were still talking and was patiently waiting for me to hang up so she could start typing again. I made a separate note of Ken's home phone number and have been busily working up a catalogue of "questions I would ask Keith Richards if I ever got the chance" in addition to all of the "but what are they really LIKE?" fan-boy type questions. Fortunately, Ken is the very soul of tolerance about these things.

★★★★★★★★★★

Almost forgot my favourite part of *Stone Alone*; Bill's line-score for the first two years of sexual conquests; Bill Wyman - 278 chicks, Brian Jones - 130 chicks, Mick Jagger - 30, Keith Richards - 6, Charlie Watts - 0,

Shallow? You bet!

CEREBUS

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MELMOTH
a short story
•
(Cerebus 139 to Cerebus 150)

Jnx_Scanz_HaCsA !!!

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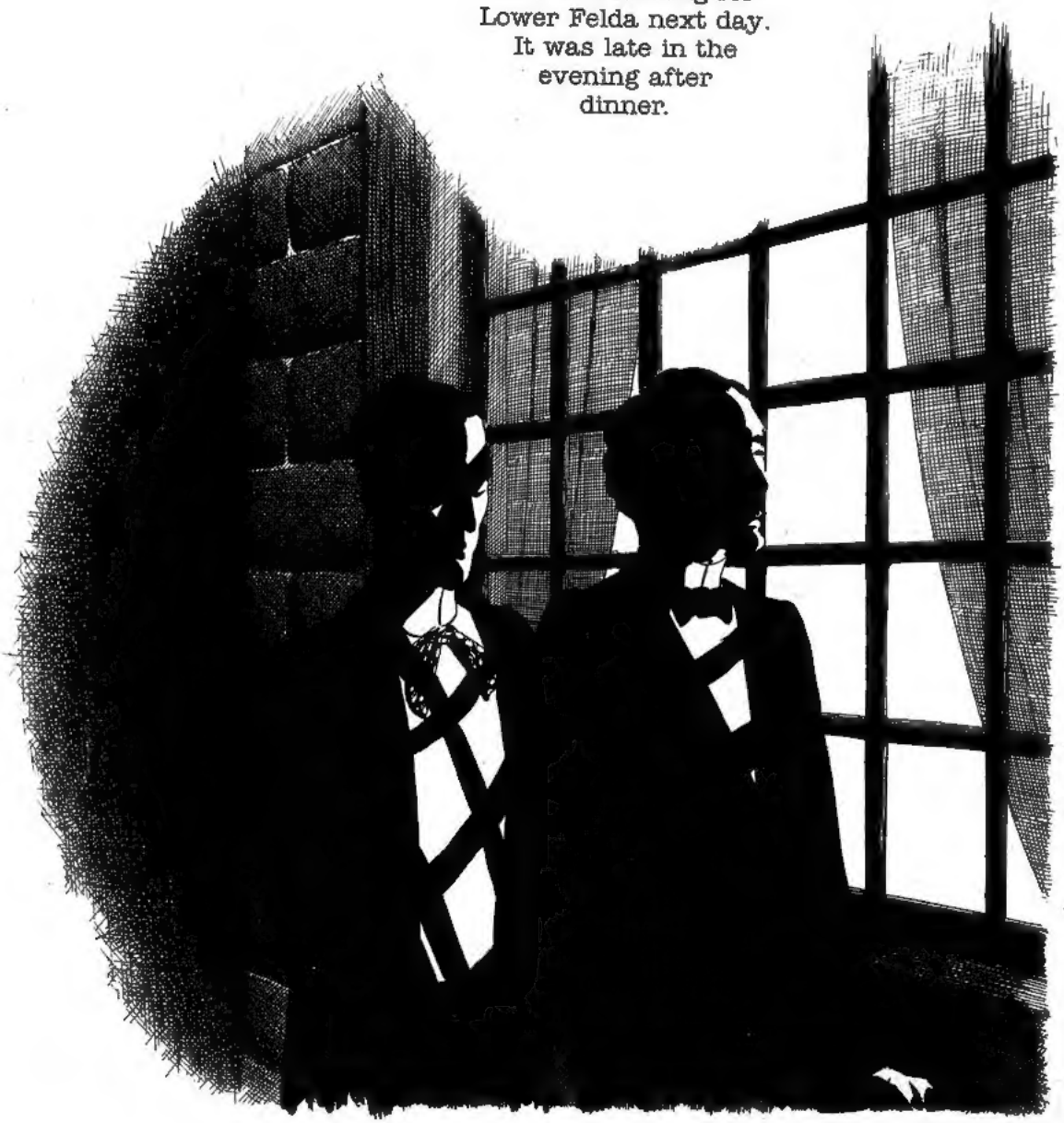
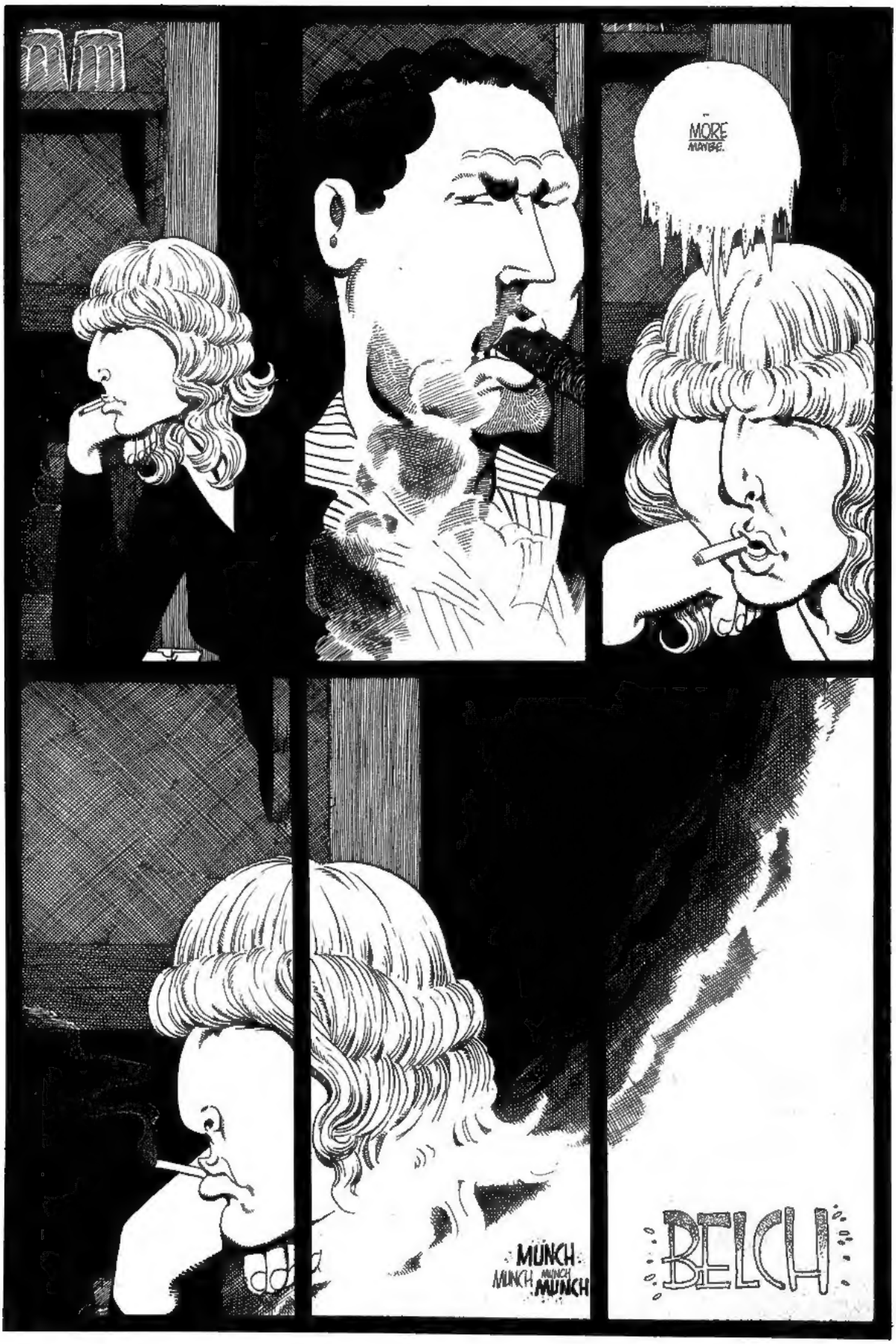
A week later
I went to the
Hôtel d'Alsace with
Reggie to say good-bye
as I was leaving for
Lower Felda next day.
It was late in the
evening after
dinner.



MENU
MUNCH
MUNCH
MUNCH

I AKSED HIM...
"ARE YUH HUNGRY."
"I DO YUH WANT SOMETHIN' TA EAT."
A HUNNERT TIMES...


MORE
MAYBE.
MUNCH
MUNCH
MUNCH
MUNCH
BELCH

Oscar went all over his financial troubles. He had just had a letter from Harris about the Smithers claim and was much upset; his speech seemed to me a little thick, but he had been given morphia the previous night and he always drank too much champagne during the day.

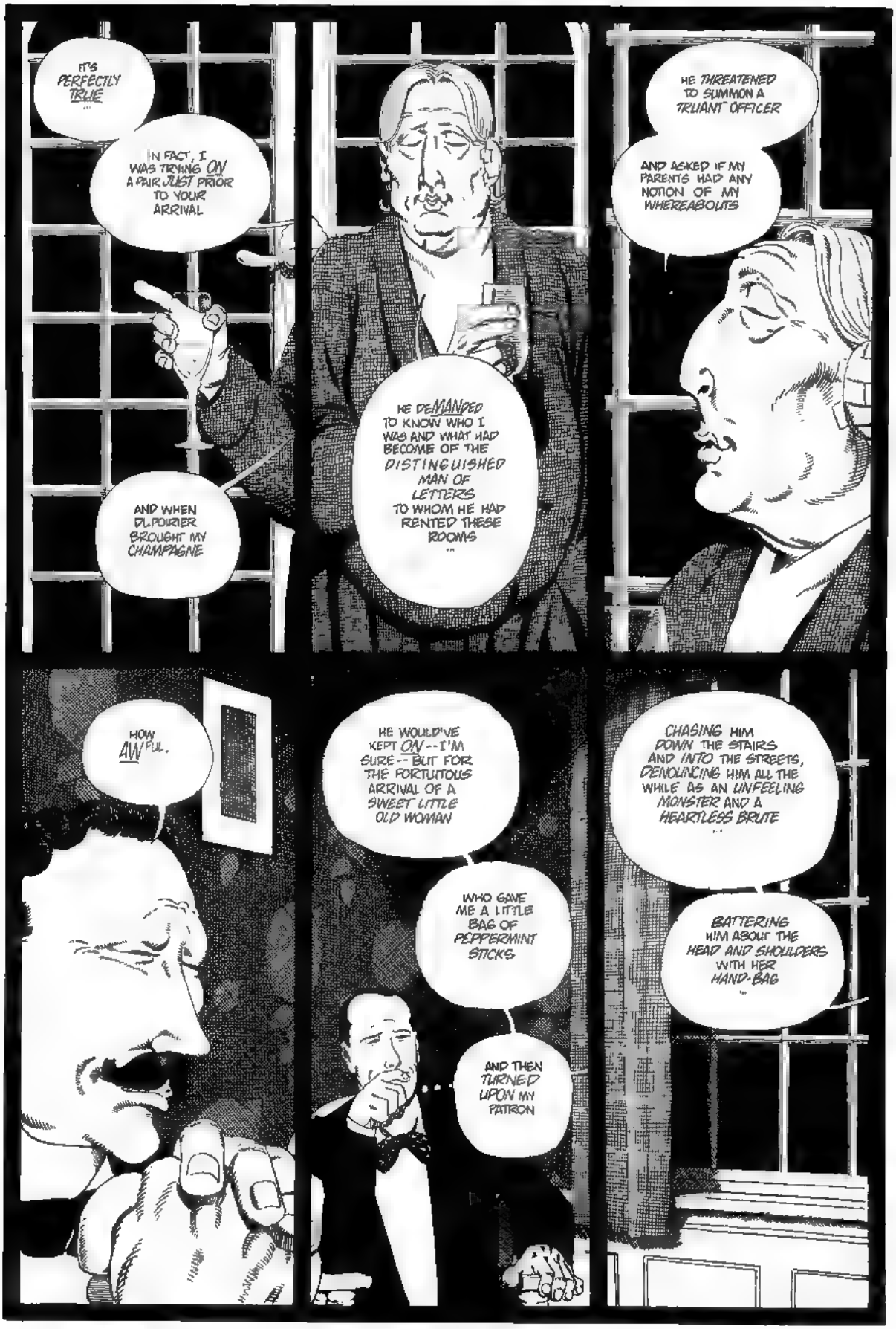
While we were talking,
the post arrived with
a very nice letter
from Alfred Douglas
enclosing a cheque.

It was
partly in
response to
my letter
I think.

Oscar wept a little but soon recovered himself.

Then we all had a friendly discussion during which Oscar walked around the room and declaimed in rather an excited way.

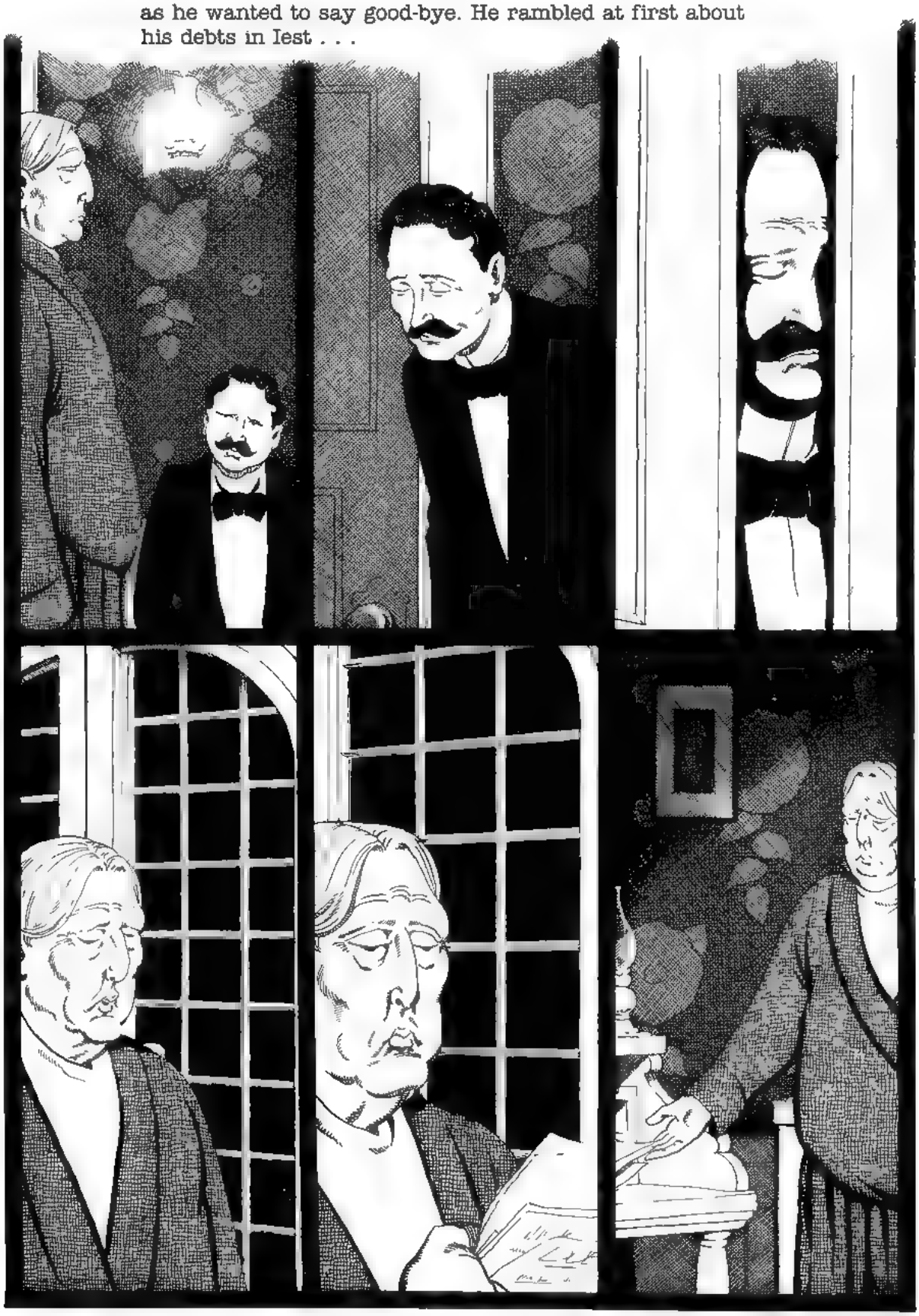
THE THREE OF US I MEAN ...
A SCHOOL BOYS' HOLIDAY
MAY?
WE'RE A BIT OLD FOR SCHOOL BOYS, AREN'T WE OSCAR?
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF REGINALD
IN A SAILOR SUIT
I COULD PASS FOR SIXTEEN.
IN SHORT PANTS?
FOURTEEN.
YOU NEEDN'T LOOK SO AMUSED ROBBIE


IT'S PERFECTLY TRUE...
IN FACT, I WAS TRYING ON A PAIR JUST PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL
AND WHEN DUPOIRIER BROUGHT MY CHAMPAGNE
HE DEMANDED TO KNOW WHO I WAS AND WHAT HAD BECOME OF THE DISTINGUISHED MAN OF LETTERS TO WHOM HE HAD RENTED THESE ROOMS...
HE THREATENED TO SUMMON A TRUANT OFFICER
AND ASKED IF MY PARENTS HAD ANY NOTION OF MY WHEREABOUTS
HOW AWFUL.
HE WOULD'VE KEPT ON--I'M SURE--BUT FOR THE FORTUITOUS ARRIVAL OF A SWEET LITTLE OLD WOMAN
WHO GAVE ME A LITTLE BAG OF PEPPERMINT STICKS
AND THEN TURNED UPON MY PATRON...
CHASING HIM DOWN THE STAIRS AND INTO THE STREETS, DENOUNCING HIM ALL THE WHILE AS AN UNFEELING MONSTER AND A HEARTLESS BRUTE...
BATTERING HIM ABOUT THE HEAD AND SHOULDERS WITH HER HAND-BAG...

I MADE READY TO HASTEN TO HIS ASS STANCE
REGRETABLY
IT TOOK SEVERAL MINUTES TO DECANT THE WINE
SO..
BY THE TIME I HAD SAMPLED THE FIRST GLASS
NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

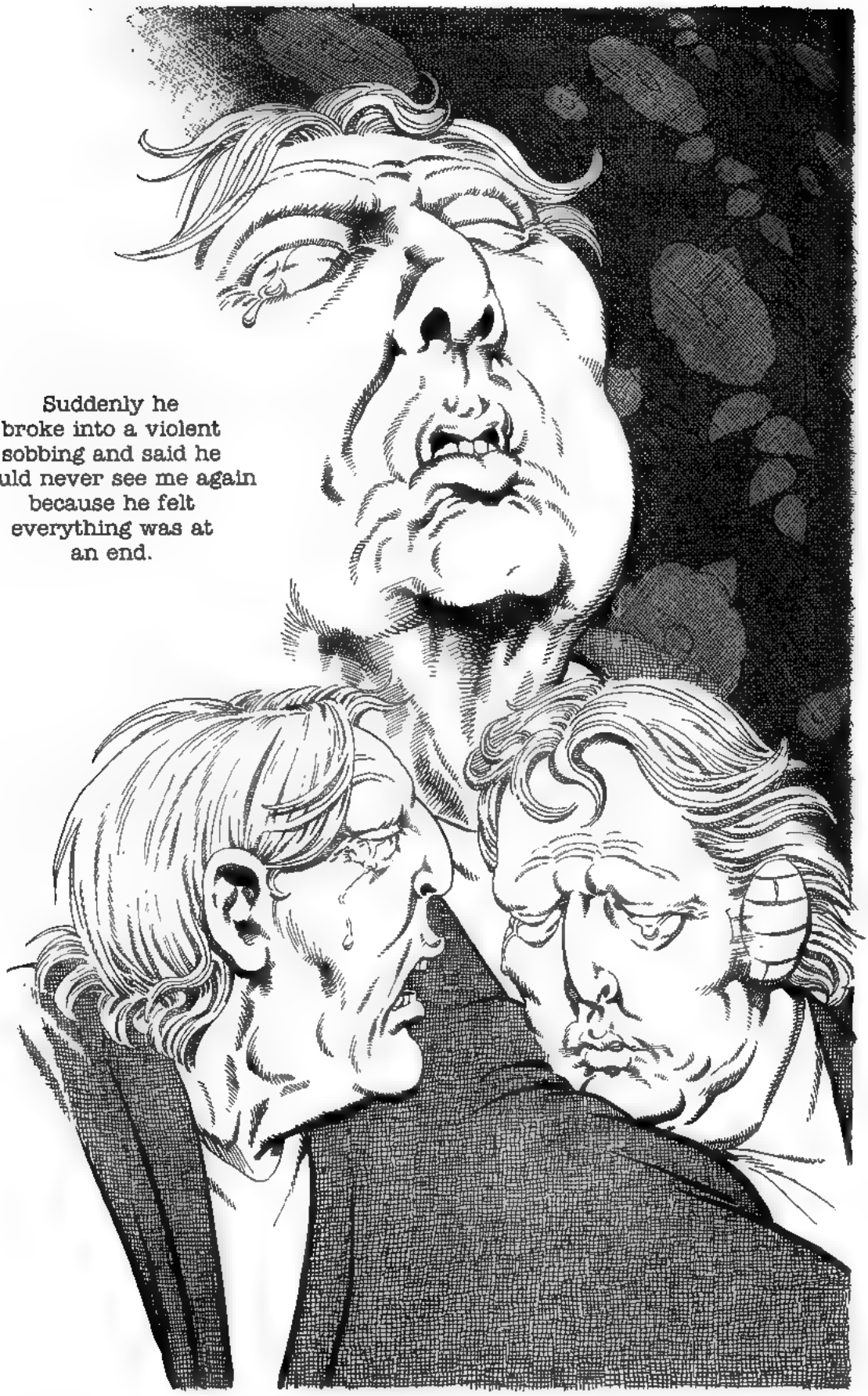
A while later I got up to go.

Suddenly Oscar asked Reggie to leave the room for a minute as he wanted to say good-bye. He rambled at first about his debts in Iest . . .



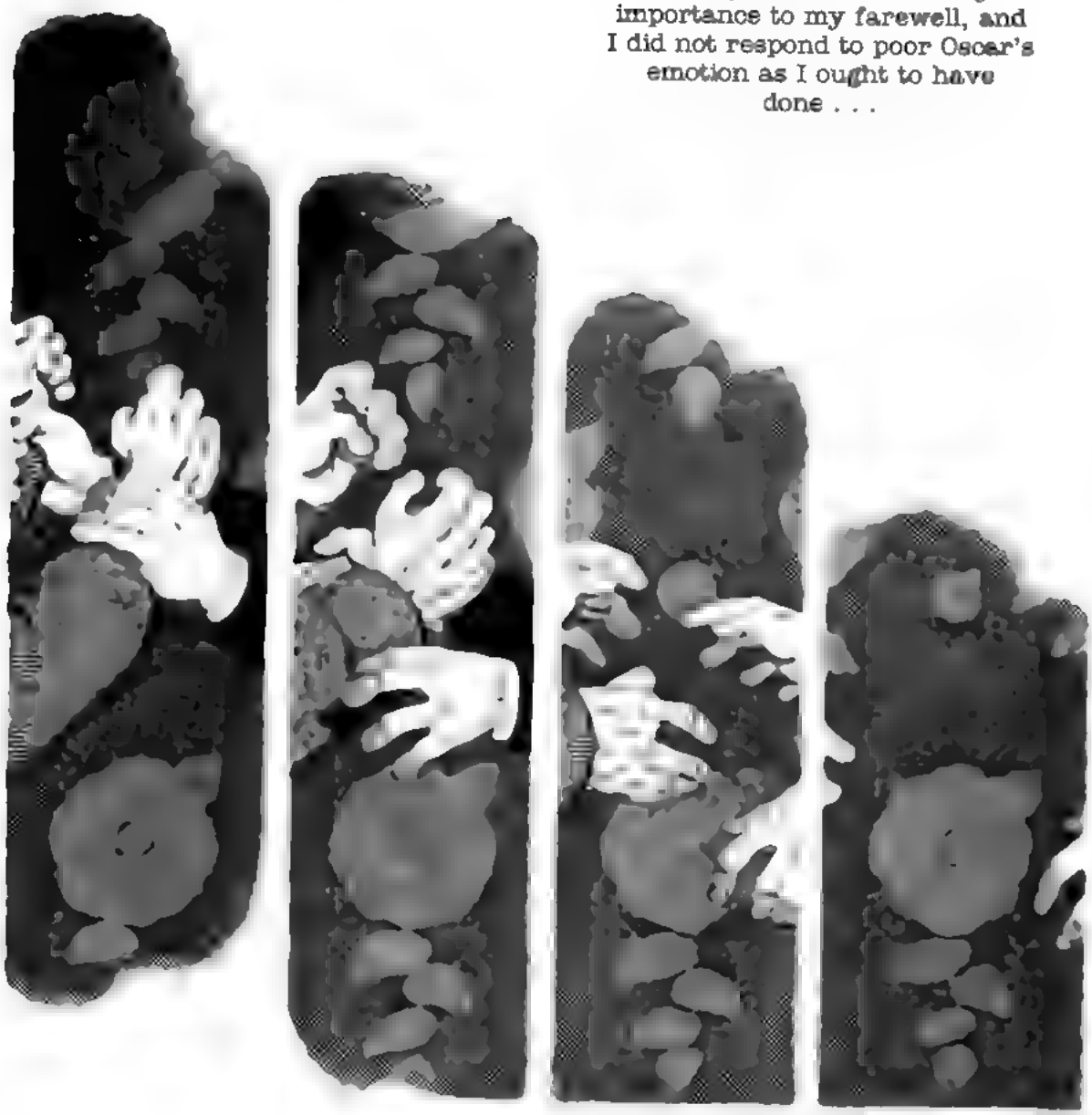
. . . and then he implored me not to go away because he felt that a great change had come over him during the last few days.

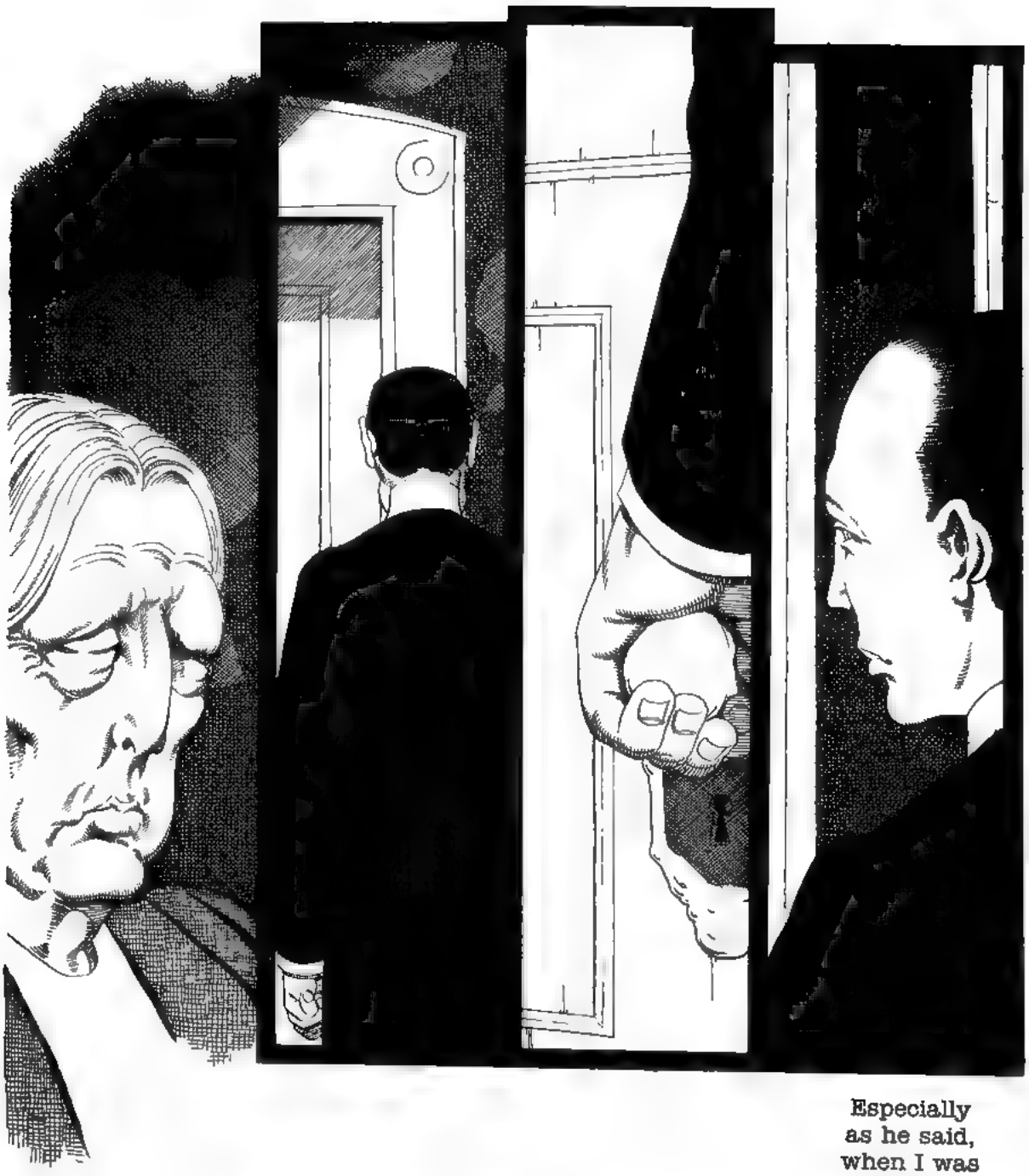
I adopted a rather stern attitude, as I really thought Oscar was simply hysterical, though I knew he was genuinely upset at my departure.


Suddenly he broke into a violent sobbing and said he would never see me again because he felt everything was at an end.

He talked about various things which I can scarcely repeat here.
Though it was very harrowing . . .

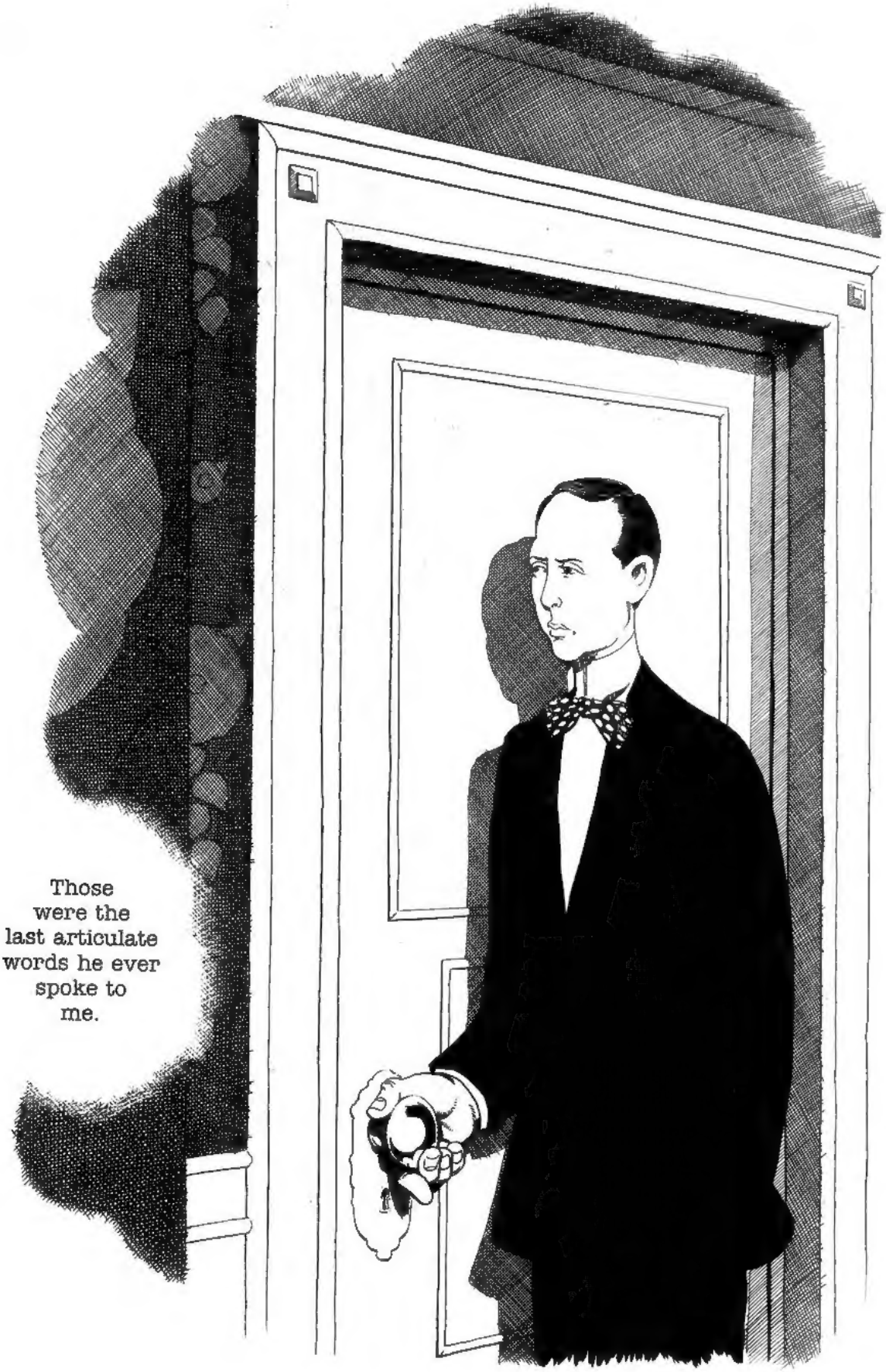
I really did not attach any importance to my farewell, and I did not respond to poor Oscar's emotion as I ought to have done . . .

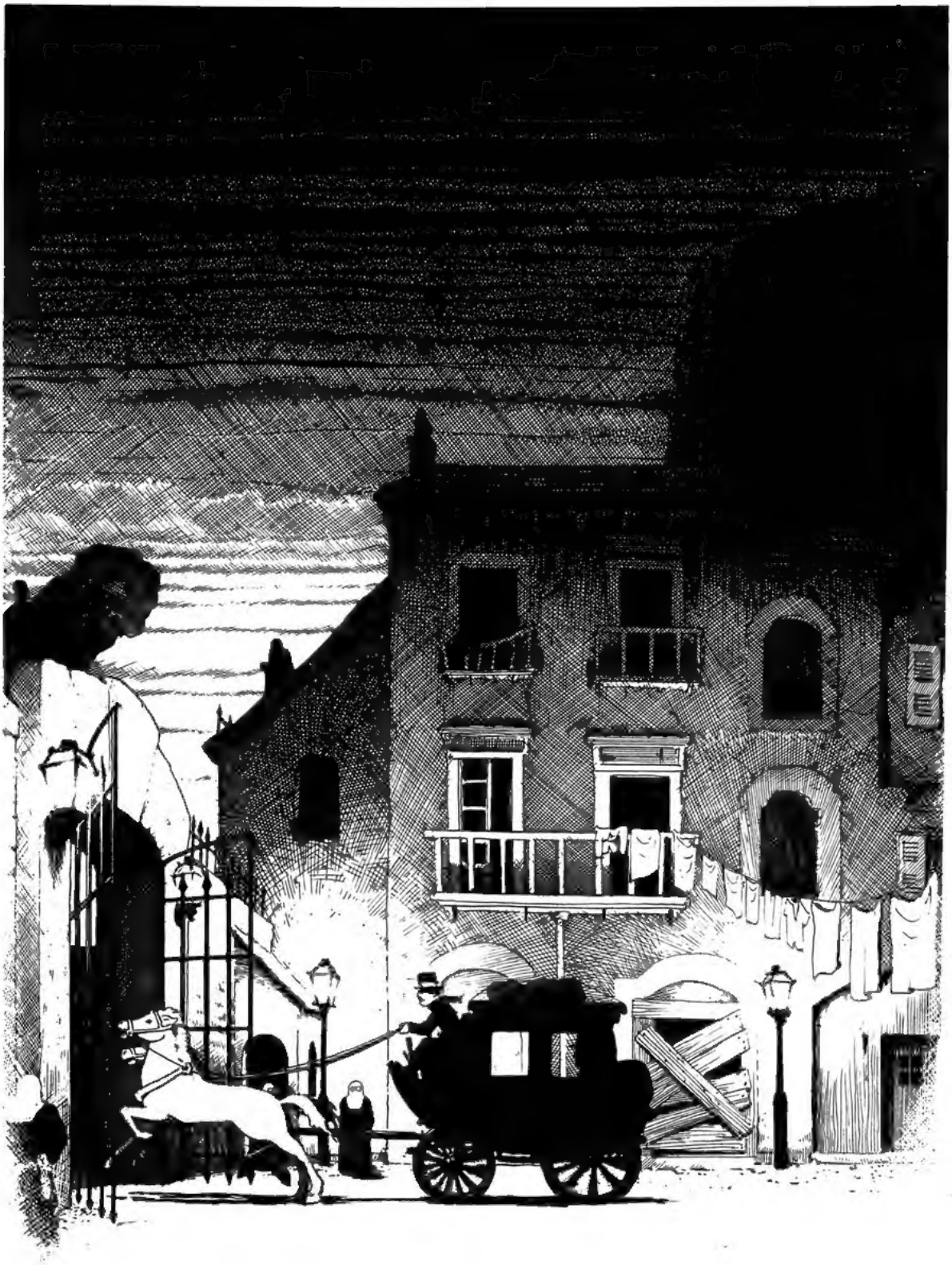




Especially as he said, when I was going out of the room . . .

LOOK OUT FOR SOME LITTLE CUP IN THE HILLS
NEAR BEDUIN
WHERE I CAN GO WHEN I AM BETTER
AND YOU CAN COME AND SEE ME OFTEN


Those were the last articulate words he ever spoke to me.



I left for Beduin the following evening.